

VP Ellipsis in Libyan Arabic

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Abstract

This study provides a general overview of the syntax of verb phrase ellipsis in Libyan Arabic with special focus on its licensing and identificational conditions. It discusses two cases of verbal ellipsis referred to as *modal ellipsis* (1) and *verb-stranding VP ellipsis* (2). In the former, the complement of the modal verb is deleted, while in the latter, where the lexical verb is assumed to have raised to T, the complement of the main verb plus all vP-related material are elided.

- (1) Ali yəgder yətkellem iṭali w ḥəтта David yəgder.
Ali can.3MS speak.3MS Italian and too David can.3MS
Intended: ‘Ali can speak Italian, and David can too.’
- (2) Ali yədfaʃ fi l-aʒaar kul šahər w ḥəтта ʕmar yədfaʃ.
Ali pay.3MS in the-rent every month and too Omar pay.3MS
Intended: ‘Ali pays the rent every month, and Omar does too’.

With respect to *modal ellipsis*, it is argued that the ellipsis cases licensed by the modal verb *yəgder* ‘can’ involve VP ellipsis. In spirit of the PF deletion approach to ellipsis, it is proposed that *modal ellipsis* is a deletion process operating at the PF interface (cf. Chomsky 1995; Merchant 2008; Aelbrecht 2010) and that it is licensed by T and triggered by an [E]llipsis feature residing in T; thus, once the modal verb has moved to T, E sends off its VP complement for non-pronunciation at PF.

As for the putative verb-stranding VP ellipsis, I claim that this should not be analysed as VP ellipsis as in Farsi (Toosarvandani 2009), Hebrew (Doron 1999; Goldberg 2005), Portuguese (Cyrino & Matos 2002) and Finnish (Holmberg 2001). Rather, such ellipsis cases should be reducible to null object constructions and/or individual argument drop. This claim rests on two arguments. First, unlike VP ellipsis, the putative verb-stranding VP ellipsis is subject to animacy and definiteness restrictions; second, it differs from VP ellipsis with respect to identity readings, locality effects and deletion of vP-related material.

References

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